

Kathmandu -- The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) announces the launch of two books that document over 200 key Supreme Court judgments from 1992 to 2009. These books showcase the Supreme Court's efforts to protect civil and political rights of all people and is a strong foundation of judicial precedent and future action. They demonstrate how even in the most politically trying times, the judiciary played a crucial role in protecting individual liberty and upholding constitutional limitations on the power of government.

The book launch was followed by a discussion on the role of the judiciary and possible reforms. Jeffery A. Moon, Chargé d'Affaires, U.S. Embassy, and Anup Raj Sharma, Acting Chief Justice were the keynote speakers.

"These books make an important contribution to Nepal's judicial system. They highlight the crucial role judges have played in upholding the rule of law against illegal activities, whatever their source. Ordinary citizens will also gain an equally important perspective on the role of judiciary," said honorable justice Sharma.

Commenting on Nepal's current political situation, Mr. Moon remarked, "The deadline for drafting the constitution is just eight months away. Now is the time to set aside disagreements and to demonstrate the courage to compromise—to stop abusing the process and focus on the substance of a new Constitution that reflects the aspirations of the Nepali people. The United States remains dedicated to helping Nepal strengthen its democratic foundation, which is needed to build a more stable and prosperous country."

Other participants at the event included Supreme Court Justices Balaram KC, Kalyan Shrestha and Prakash Osti, President of the Nepal Bar Association Bishwa Kanta Mainali, and Chairperson of the Nepal Law Society Kusum Shrestha. The event was also attended by judges, bar association leaders, law professors, political scientists, senior political leaders, government and court officials, Constituent Assembly members, and the Asia Foundation Country Representative Dr. George Varughese. The speakers lauded previous US-Nepal cooperation and expressed optimism about efforts to further improve the quality of justice in Nepal.

The books were published with support from USAID's Strengthen Rule of Law program implemented by the Asia Foundation in close partnership with the Nepal Law Society. The Strengthen Rule of Law program has provided extensive technical and material assistance to support the Supreme Court's reform agenda, as well as capacity building of the appellate and

district courts.

USAID has made many critical contributions to Nepal's development since the 1950s. Strengthening democracy in Nepal is central to the community-level approach of USAID activities, and contributes to human rights, economic growth, and political and social stability.

The Asia Foundation has maintained an office in Nepal since 1992. It currently supports local initiatives to strengthen the rule of law and human rights, promote sustainable peace, expand economic opportunities, and safeguard women's rights and security.